



FORUM

Facts, Outcomes, & Research... Useful for Managing

CUSTOMER SURVEYS

BY FRANK RETHERFORD

A good sales rep is always listening to his or her customer, and because of this the company benefits by gaining the feedback to improve products and services. That's why good salespeople will ask a lot of questions and are willing to listen to complaints. Well, you've most likely done this kind of information gathering before, but have wondered "how can we know how satisfied our customers are if we don't have regular face-to-face contact with them?" That's where a good customer survey can help. Surveys are really communication tools! In state government your customer base is diverse which makes measuring customer satisfaction a bit more challenging, but still worth the effort.

So how do you conduct a survey and what do you do with it when it's completed? There really is no perfect approach for assessing customer satisfaction. Usually what will work best for your purposes will depend on the kind of products and services you provide, the types of customers you have, and how many you serve. Since surveys are communication tools, you'll want to spend time to prepare well thought out questions, ones that don't send the wrong message, and ones that you can act upon once the results are known. Here are a few basic considerations:

Plan

- Know the purpose of your survey. Ask yourself why you're in need of surveying your customers and what are your objectives.
- Define who your customers are.
- Make a survey plan and determine how often you'll need to survey. Periodic surveys allow you to make comparisons to prior results and benchmarks.
- Determine whether there is a confidentiality issue with customer responses.
- Determine if there are factors, such as complexity, size, and impartiality concerns that cause you to employ an outside survey expert.
- Determine the resources that are needed and how much you'll be able to afford.
- Get those individuals familiar with the subject matter involved.
- Get organizational approval to conduct a survey.

Develop the Survey

- Decide on a data collection method, for example, a focus group interaction between customers and a facilitator, a telephone survey, or a written survey that can be mailed, emailed, or put onto your web site.
- Develop the survey questions. Make sure they're clear, concise, and related to your objectives.
- Include a few core questions, these are questions you plan to repeat each time you survey, for example, "rate the timeliness of our report."



FOR YOUR INFORMATION..

PUBLICATION OF THE MONTH

[How to Conduct Customer Surveys](#)

Found at <http://www.iccs-isac.org/eng/pubs.htm>. Provided by the Institute for Citizen-Centered Service.

WEB SITE OF THE MONTH

[Customer Surveys for Agency Managers](#)

Urban Institute <http://www.urban.org/pubs/csam>. Here you'll find resources for helping with your next survey.

DEFINITION OF THE MONTH

Cost-Effectiveness: Used in comparing methods of attaining an explicit objective on the basis of least cost or greatest effectiveness for a given level of cost. Example: A treatment program may be more cost-effective than an alternative program if it produces a lower rate of recidivism for the same or lower costs, or the same rate of recidivism for a lower cost.

DOC MONTHLY STATISTICS AS OF JULY 31, 2005

CONFINEMENT POPULATION17,612

Total Confinement15,499

Work Release699

In State Rented Beds627

Out of State Rented Beds787

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS POPULATION

ACTIVE SUPERVISION28,329

RMA8,095

RMB7,079

RMC2,214

RMD9,390

Unclassified1,551

MONETARY83

INACTIVE STATUS14,813

ESCAPES FROM SECURITY LEVELS 2-5, FOR FY06

Date	Type	Return
No escapes to date this fiscal year.		

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Webpages, under Budget and Research, on the DOCNET homepage

- Many surveys use a mix of open-ended and closed-ended questions. An open question allows the customer to respond in their own words, and a close question requires the customer to respond using a scale, choosing between multiple choices, or responding "yes" or "no."
- Pre-test your survey questions with others.

Implement the Survey

- Ensure that your survey method is working. For example, if you're doing a telephone survey, make sure the callers are performing according to their training. Also, if you're doing an email or Internet survey, check to see if there are any customers who didn't have access who would like to respond via another method.

CUSTOMER SURVEYS

(CONTINUED)

- Be consistent in your implementation. For example, make sure you're processing and recording the returns accurately.
- Determine the type of analysis you'll want to do on the returns, for example, consider collapsing data into smaller numbers of meaningful categories; display frequencies of the number of customers responding a certain way; show averages; and review any customer comments for trends.
- Thank your customers for taking the time to respond.

Make Recommendations for Action

- Discuss the findings with your work group, validate your findings, and formulate your conclusions.
- Prepare a written summary of your findings and recommendations.
- Develop an action plan to improve and enhance services.
- Review what worked and what didn't work in your survey.

Here are some resources for helping with your next survey: "Customer Surveys for Agency Managers," Urban Institute, <http://www.urban.org/pubs/csam>, and "How to Conduct Customer Surveys," Institute for Citizen-Centered Service, <http://www.iccs-isac.org/eng/pubs.htm>. Also, Department of Corrections' Information Technology Section has helpful survey software.

Remember that in addition to conducting a survey, there are other ways of assessing customer satisfaction that you can do on a daily basis. For example, you can insert a feedback card with your report, ask for comments in your email, call customers to see if they're satisfied with the information you gave them, or just listen to your customer the next chance you get.

We at *Budget Resource Management* are planning to survey our customers on how satisfied they are with our Intranet web site. Please keep a watch for it. Meanwhile, visit our site on DOCNET, under the "Budget and Research" link, and check out all the reports that are available on line.

STAFF PROFILE

NE REGION EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER

BY CINDY GREENSLITT

Congratulations to J'Anna Young who was selected as the NE Region Employee of the Quarter for April through June 2005. J'Anna works as a Human Resource Consultant at Airway Heights Corrections Center (AHCC). She was nominated for her hard work in getting information out on the new Public Service Reform Act. On her own initiative, J'Anna lightened the burden and stress for all of the human resource offices by volunteering to set up the queries and run the mail merges for all of the region/field, AHCC and Pine Lodge Corrections Center for Women. Having a single point of contact in the region was also helpful to those in Olympia coordinating the project. They commented on how much they appreciated J'Anna and how positive and constructive she has been in her interactions with them.



J'ANNA YOUNG

NE REGION TEAM OF THE QUARTER (CONTINUED)

BY CINDY GREENSLITT

Food Manager Maria Arteaga and Adult Corrections Cooks Leslie Pipes, Gary Wassom, Mike Rosner, Cory Nuner, Chris Burnette, and John Christiansen are the team of winners of the NE Region Team of the Quarter for April through June 2005. The Minimum Security Unit Kitchen staff at Airway Heights Corrections Center were the first to implement



MARIA ARTEAGA, RON SEARLS, MIKE ROSNER, LESLIE PIPES, AND CORY NUNER

the initial and revised cycle menus which created inventory changes and the necessity to work closely with the Warehouse staff and the Main Institution. Ms. Arteaga and the team took the lead to identify efficiencies and understand the benefits of marketing the positives and get offender buy-in. They set up tier representation meetings so the offenders could understand the bigger picture.

